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“A Thoreau Drawn Diagram of Ktaadn:” if it exists, where is it?

December 2019

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<https://sites.google.com/a/maine.edu/mountain-explorations/home>

“A Thoreau Drawn Diagram of Ktaadn:” if it exists, where is it?

“With a diagram [Henry David] Thoreau had made in the middle of the last century, when he paid Katahdin what was to become a famous visit,” three Colby College

professors set out on Friday June 28, 1912 to hike the mountain. “[They] borrowed the Thoreau diagram from the Colby College Miller Library.” The only account of the trip is Professor Webster Chester’s (biology), whose two colleagues were Professors Carter (mathematics) and Little (geology). He published his single account in the January 10, 1970 edition of the *Lewiston Journal Magazine* of the *Lewiston Evening Journal*. Only Chester was alive at the time.<sup>1</sup>

Could Thoreau have drawn a Mount Katahdin “diagram” that was detailed enough for the three professors to rely upon to climb mount Katahdin? Thoreau did surveying, climbed and circumnavigated the mountain, critiqued Maine maps, and knew nearly all the other early Katahdin climbers, who were his Boston area colleagues. Yes, he could have.

Chester’s account of his party’s route over Katahdin suggested what information the diagram provided and described the route the group took. The party reached the summit via Thoreau’s Abol slide route, which was on the diagram. For reasons unexplained, soon after they left the summit on a easterly running trail, their desired exit route to Stacyville, and the one on the diagram, they turned back to look for another route east.

The cloud ceiling dropped and concealed their surroundings. They found another route east, but the steepness and the rain made for slippery footing, so they did not take it. Instead, they knowingly proceeded north along a blazed line, not on the diagram, and descended to reach the top of a log sluice (not on the diagram) that they followed into a valley. They unknowingly reached the east running Wassataquoik Stream valley,

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<sup>1</sup> Courtesy of the Sun Media Group; a copy of the full article follows at the end of this text. The magazine section was a bimonthly publication; the following issue contained no corrections to this article.

unlabeled on the diagram and, perhaps, not even on it. They followed the stream east stumbling upon a logging camp and got directions. The professors carried a compass and knew in what directions they hiked.

Chester wrote that they needed to find a map to show them how to get to Katahdin. Did that include a route from Millinocket, which they reached by train, to the trail up the mountain and the trails on the mountain? A Thoreau drawn diagram would have only included the waterway routes to and from Katahdin as no communities or logging roads or rail lines between either the Fowler farm (Millinocket area) or the Hunt farm (Stacyville area) and the Katahdin massif area existed at the time. The professors could have obtained directions to Thoreau's Abol route in Millinocket; the only road at the time was the loggers' well-used Nesowadnehunk Tote Road.

Without realizing it the Chester party found the existing 1912 trails on the Katahdin summit area. The Abol route approached the summit from the south. A route went across the Knife Edge to Pamola at the east end of the Knife Edge and down to the Basin Ponds area to a trail that went east to Stacyville and the railroad. The Keep Trail, which went from the summit directly east to Pamola and on to the Hunt farm area and of which Thoreau knew, was no longer in use. Their second attempt at descending east was from the active "Saddle" route. The blazes to the north marked the route into Wassataquoik valley and east to Stacyville.

Thoreau could have drawn a diagram that had the features of the diagram the Chester party had. From his 1846 climb he knew details of the West Branch, landslides, Abol Stream, the peaks of the Katahdin massif, and could plot his route in relation to the stream (Abol). On his 1857 return trip down the East Branch of the Penobscot River he

had planned to climb the Keep route from the Hunt farm area.<sup>2</sup> Thoreau knew Elizabeth Oakes Smith, who, with Nancy Mossman, climbed the route in 1849. He also knew Edward E. Hale and William F. Channing, whose 1845 route went from the Hunt farm area west up Wassataquiok valley on the north side of the Katahdin massif where it turned south going up across Russell Mountain on the north shoulder of the massif.

That Thoreau did not know the Saddle route or the route from the east end of the summit's Knife Edge down to Basin Ponds are not reasons to exclude him as a possible drawer of the diagram. Chester's account provided few clues as to the detail of the diagram in depicting the Katahdin peaks area. The diagram apparently did not include the route north. Chester's words imply that one trail went east from the top of the mountain, but without a sense of the diagram's scale, the reader can only guess which one it was, the one across the Knife Edge to Pamola and north down to Basin Ponds or the Keep route across the Knife Edge to Pamola and southeasterly down a slide or the route down the Saddle.

Is it possible such a possible diagram exists? Even with the assistance received from the staff of a number of libraries, and museums, and interested persons, I have not yet recovered a Thoreau-drawn diagram of "Ktaadn."

The Colby College Miller Library staff, responding through Patricia Burdick, found nothing in its collections that matched the "Thoreau diagram" as described by Chester. The staff thought the diagram might have appeared in an addition of *The Maine Woods* published before the 1912 trip, but did not find such a graphic in the editions they hold. The library has no unpublished materials by Thoreau.

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<sup>2</sup> Marcus Keep worked on that route in the years 1846 through 1849.

At the Concord Library Leslie Wilson and Conni Manoli and were not aware of such a diagram. The only related resource in the library's collection is a Thoreau survey.<sup>3</sup> It is a map of public lands in Maine on which Thoreau made a few notes.

David Wood, Curator at the Concord Museum in Concord, Massachusetts wrote that the museum had no information pertaining to a "Thoreau diagram."

Jeff Cramer, Curator of Collections, of the Walden Woods Project, was not aware of any Katahdin diagram that Thoreau drew. He knew of the published maps Thoreau used on his three trips through the Katahdin region and the one with Thoreau's penciled notes. He did a search and based it on the assumption that Chester may not have known exactly what he was looking at, and may have been looking at a diagram or sketch of a map of Thoreau's *Ktaadn*, but not one drawn by Thoreau. He went through every article and book the Project has that was published in or before 1912. One book, published in 1909, has a map (published in various books later on), but it is of a large area of the Maine woods.

I went to the Maine State Library and went through every past and current book they have related to Thoreau to see if I could find a "diagram," but I did not.

The Hathi Trust website has the following editions of pre-1912 *The Maine Woods* available, 1864, 1866, 1877, 1884, 1892, 1906, and 1909). No place in *The Maine Woods* did Thoreau mention drawing a diagram. However, a 1909 abridged and edited version by Clifton Johnson has a map (first map below) of that area of Maine Thoreau traveled through on his three northern Maine journeys; its title is, "Map of Thoreau's Maine Woods."<sup>4</sup> This map does not match Chester's description of the map he borrowed.

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3 <<https://concordlibrary.org/special-collections/thoreau-surveys/165>>.

4 Henry D. Thoreau, *The Maine Woods*, abridged and edited by Clifton Johnson, appearing in The Riverside Literature Series as *Katahdin and Chesuncook*. New York:

“The Writings of Henry D. Thoreau,” a website and ongoing effort to make available unabridged Thoreau writing, housed for years at Princeton University and now at the University of California Santa Barbara, engaged Joseph Moldenhauer as editor for its volume, *The Maine Woods*, 1972.<sup>5</sup> The text includes an exhaustive compendium and analysis of Thoreau’s documents related to his writing of the book. Moldenhauer made no mention of nor does he use words that would imply Thoreau ever made a map during or after any of his three Maine journeys when working on the book’s text. Moldenhauer knew his research was not exhaustive and listed what he knew to be documents Thoreau wrote, but are apparently lost. He included a copy of Coffin’s map of 1835. Thoreau could have drawn such a diagram in another context.

The organization, “The Writings of Henry D. Thoreau,” is responsible putting together 650 pieces of Thoreau’s correspondence in three volumes.<sup>6</sup> A review of the currently available first two volumes revealed no map pictures or words that hint to one’s existence. Thoreau did not make his Katahdin journeys for purposes of mapmaking, so its absence in his writing presented in these two volumes is not surprising. However, that does not preclude him from making a drawing from memory upon an inquiry of someone at a later date.

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Houghton Mifflin Company, 1909.

5 Henry D. Thoreau, *The Maine Woods*, Joseph Moldenhauer, editor. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1972. Subsequent editions of this book (1983, 2004) did not include any update on the textural matter included in the 1972 edition.

6 Henry D. Thoreau, *Correspondence of Henry D. Thoreau*, Vol.1, 1834-1848, edited by Robert N. Hudspeth. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2013.  
Henry D. Thoreau, *Correspondence of Henry D. Thoreau*, Vol.2, 1849-1856, edited by Robert N. Hudspeth with Elizabeth Hall Witherall and Lihony Xie. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2018. Volume 3: 1857-1862 is not yet available. The full text of each of these books is online at “The Writings of Henry D. Thoreau,” website.

The Library of Congress website notes the John Hessler work of searching out maps of Thoreau in thousands of previous uncatalogued Thoreau notes.<sup>7</sup> Hessler made no mention of a Thoreau diagram of Katahdin.

The New York Public Library Berg Collection contains Thoreau's "Ktaadn and the Maine Woods" manuscript that he submitted to *The Union Magazine of Literature and Art*, so I searched their digitized Thoreau documents, and found Thoreau's annotations, but no maps or diagrams. I communicated with Emma Davidson of the Berg Collection and she double-checked the Berg's online and card catalogs and found nothing related to Katahdin beyond the reference mentioned above.

The Morgan Library and Museum online catalogue provides detailed notes of its Thoreau holdings. In a search of the documents with one word at a time using, Ktaadn, Katahdin, drawing, diagram, sketch and map, two maps are cited, but the description of each indicated that neither was of Katahdin.

The John Hay Library (Brown University) digital site has a category titled "Thoreau maps," but did not list the particular maps. Heather Cole responded to my inquiry and wrote that a Ktaadn map was not present.

At the Appalachian Mountain Club Archives Becky Fullerton wrote that they have no Thoreau diagram of Katahdin.

The Thoreau Society's archived collection, word searchable, which includes *The Thoreau Society Bulletin*, (1941- present) and *The Concord Saunterer* (1966 – present) have neither diagram nor any reference to such a diagram.

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<sup>7</sup> John Hessler, "From Ortelius to Champlain: The Lost Maps of Henry David Thoreau," *The Concord Saunterer*, New Series, Vol. 18 (2010), pp. 1-26.



The now defunct Thoreau Fellowship, a group dedicated to Thoreau's presence in Maine, gave the Raymond Fogler Library of the University of Maine Special Collections all its materials. The Fellowship's *Thoreau Journal Quarterly* (1969-1981) has no Thoreau diagram nor do any of its other holdings. Desiree Butterfield-Nagy, special collections librarian, provided a detailed catalogue of the papers, which contained no map as did none of the books of the Fellowship's collection.

The Thoreau Country Project, "Mapping Thoreau Country," website has the maps Thoreau drew and with which he otherwise worked. The Thoreau diagram does not appear on this site.

With all the research that focused on Thoreau's three trips to Maine in celebration of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death in 2012, one would assume that if a Thoreau diagram had been previously published that someone might have discovered it and included it in a publication at that time, but I did not find one.

Other searches using an institution's search engine and digital archives also unveiled no Thoreau drawing: Abernethy Library, Middlebury College, American Antiquarian Society, Beinecke Library, Yale University; Boston Athenaeum, Boston Public Library, Ella Strong Denison Library, Scripps College; Henry Ransom Center, University of Texas; Houghton Library, Harvard University; Joel Meyerson Collection, University of South Carolina; Osher Map Library, University of Southern Maine Library.

If it was not Thoreau's "diagram," then whose "diagram" did the Chester party borrow?

Chester, relying on his memory 58 years after the trip, recalled Thoreau. Given the scholarly interests of these men, one can imagine their knowledge of Thoreau's connection to Maine and the Katahdin region. When he visited the library he was perhaps thinking of Thoreau, and borrowed something that served as a map that he associated with Thoreau.

When Thoreau started his 1846 trip he was not carrying a map, but that changed when he reached Mattawamkeag and saw Greenleaf's map of Maine hanging on a wall. He traced that portion of the map around the West Branch and Katahdin.<sup>8</sup> On the basis of what he observed on his trip, he mentioned errors. However, he also saw and maybe traced "The Map of the Public Lands of Maine and Massachusetts"<sup>9</sup> and deemed its cartographer had marked things more accurately and included more labels.

When he made the Chesuncook trip in 1853 he carried the public lands map and Colton's *Railroad and Township Map of Maine*, which he noted was basically a copy of the public lands map. Even though he made notes on the map and that map with the notes survived (at Concord Library), this trip was west of Katahdin and notes would not have been helpful to a hiker approaching Katahdin from the east or south.

In 1857 when he made his Allagash trip he again carried the public lands map and the Colton map. On his return down the East Branch of the Penobscot River he planned to climb Katahdin from the east side, but the sore feet of his companion caused him to abandon that idea. His text was clear; he did not know the trail's precise starting point on the East Branch. Loggers using the Hunt Farm informed him.

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8 Greenleaf produced a number of Maine maps between 1816 and 1834 when he died.

9 The leading title printed on this map was: "A Plan of the Public Lands in the State of Maine, 1835." The land commissioners of both the state of Massachusetts and the state of Maine commissioned it.

The Greenleaf<sup>10</sup> and Colton<sup>11</sup> maps mentioned by Thoreau in *The Maine Woods* did not have the trails that were on the Chester party map. Additionally, these maps used a scale so small that it precluded the use of labels that would be helpful on such a journey.

Maps to guide primarily sportsmen, hunters, fishermen, and canoe travelers, and to a much lesser degree hikers, began to appear in 1874 with John Way's guide book and map.<sup>12</sup> Lucius L. Hubbard continued such publications from 1879 through 1906.<sup>13</sup> Charles A.J. Farrar produced guidebooks and maps during this same era.<sup>14</sup> None of the maps of these three men included the trails on Chester's map, but they included the Wassataquiok valley on the north side of Katahdin.

*The Maine Sportsman's Magazine* (1893-1908), a monthly, focused on northern Maine hunting and fishing, but had stories about excursions in the Katahdin area. However, no issue contained a "Thoreau drawing" like Chester described.

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10 Moses Greenleaf, Maine's greatest mapmaker produced his first map of Maine in 1816, which he reprinted in 1820. He continued to produce improved maps of Maine. They appeared in published format in at least 1829, 1835, and 1844.

11 *Colton's Railroad and Township Map of the State of Maine with Portions of New Hampshire, New Brunswick, Canada*. Published by J.H. Colton, New York, 1852. Colton published another variation on this map in 1855.

12 John M. Way, Jr. *Guide to Moosehead Lake and Northern Maine*. Boston: Bradford and Antony, 1874

13 Hubbard, Lucius L. Map of Moosehead Lake and Northern Maine, 1879, 1883, 1891, 1894; Map of Northern Maine Specially for Sports and Lumbermen, 1879, 1883, 1897, 1899, 1900, 1906.

Hubbard, Lucius L. *Summer Vacations at Moosehead Lake and Vicinity*. Boston: A. Williams, 1879, 1880, 1882.

Hubbard, Lucius L. *Hubbard's Guide to Moosehead Lake and Northern Maine*. Cambridge, MA: Author, 1889 and 1893.

14 Farrar, Captain Charles A. J. *Down The West Branch*. Boston: Lee & Shepard, 1886.

Farrar, Captain Charles A. J. *Farrar's Guide to Moosehead Lake and North Maine Wilderness*. Boston: Lee & Shepard, 1890.

R.M. Nason copyrighted the *Sportsman's and Lumberman's Map of Maine, 1906*,<sup>15</sup> it has the trails of the Chester map, the road from Millinocket to the Abol Trail, and the land to the north of Katahdin, the Wassataquoik valley. Chester's party probably did not have this map because it included the land north of Katahdin.

*Appalachia*, a periodical published twice yearly by the Appalachian Mountain Club beginning in 1876, included one Katahdin map (1881) (second map below) before 1913. The map accompanied Charles E. Hamlin's 1881 article, "Routes to Ktaadn." Hamlin wrote his article with the intent of providing information on how to reach the mountain and climb it; thus, it reads like a detailed guidebook. He made his trips to Katahdin in 1877, 1879, and 1880, but he did not draw the accompanying map. The details and measurements in his article would have been helpful to any mapmaker. J.W. and J. Sewall of Old Town, founders of the current James W. Sewall Company of Old Town, produced it in 1881.

This Sewall map has the two routes up the mountain that were on the Chester party map; the Abol route and the route to the east to the railroad. The map depicts land north of Katahdin, but contains no trails or roads. Absent from the map is the railroad line to Millinocket, Millinocket village, and the Nesowadnehunk Tote Road to the Abol route, none of which existed in 1881.

Parker B. Field, AMC president in 1907, did a hand drawn map of Katahdin that first appeared in the 1917 revised edition of *A Guide to Paths in the White Mountains and Adjacent Regions*.<sup>16</sup> Information about Katahdin did not appear in earlier editions.

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15 R.M. Nason, *Sportsman's and Lumberman's Map of Maine, 1906*, as drawn by R.E. Mullaney, issued by the Eastern Improvement Company

16 Field laid out the original Club Path from the Pinkham Notch Road to the Raymond Path near Hermit Lake, Tuckerman's Ravine in 1900.

AMC's August Camp for 1916 was at Katahdin, and Field was there, so he was probably collected his information at that time.<sup>17</sup> The only trails the map included were: the Abol route, the Knife Edge Route to the east, the Saddle route east and the trail over the north peaks down to the Wassataquiok valley to Stacyville. This map fits Chester's description of the "diagram he used" with two exceptions, it extended beyond the north peaks and it was not available until after 1912.

AMC members were going to Katahdin before 1912, but the AMC archives contain no clues as to what maps(s) they might have used.

*The New Northeast*, a short-lived monthly, illustrated magazine published in Bangor, Maine, printed a map of Katahdin that accompanied the article by Augustus C. Hamlin in its July 1894 edition. The article, "Routes to Katahdin," had the label "paper no. 1" and described only one route. The magazine never published any subsequent "Hamlin paper." Hamlin's hand drawn map had the route to the north; it was not on the "Thoreau diagram" of Chester's party. Subsequent "papers" were not listed as present in the Hamlin papers contained in Special Collections University of Maine Raymond Fogler Library.

A Bangor and Aroostook Railroad yearly publication began in 1894. The title of the editions varied from year to year until 1901 when the company began its yearly use of the title, *In the Maine Woods*. The book was a promotional guide to outdoor recreation, fishing, hunting, hiking and canoeing in northern Maine. No Katahdin map appeared in the publication prior to 1913. A printed copy of the 1917 Parker map that cut off that

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<sup>17</sup> The records of AMC excursions prior to 1916 as printed in the issues of *Appalachia* do not contain a listing of Field visiting Katahdin before 1916.

portion of the map north of the North Peaks appeared in the 1923 issue of *In the Maine Woods*.

A JSTOR search of Arts and Sciences (I-V, XII) using “Katahdin” and “Ktaadn,” as suggested by Sarah Otley, Mantor Library staff member at the University of Maine at Farmington, suggested a different search focus, a map within an article related to a scientific excursion to the mountain before 1912. The search led to two hand drawn Katahdin maps. The map in the Emile Williams article had no trails and was a poor match for what the Chester party used.<sup>18</sup>

The second map (third map below) was one Charles E. Hamlin had James W. Sewall of Old Town, Maine create for his presentation and published paper, “Observations upon the Physical Geography and Geology of Mount Ktaadn and the Adjacent District.”<sup>19</sup> This map has the Abol Trail, but not the trail east from the summit area. This map is not the same as the Sewall map Hamlin used to accompany his 1881 *Appalachia* article, “Routes to Ktaadn.”<sup>20</sup>

A third 1881 Katahdin area map, also made by the Sewalls, may have been the one the Sewalls used to create the two maps Hamlin used.<sup>21</sup>

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18 Emile F. Williams, “A comparison of the Flora of Mt. Washington and Mt. Katahdin,” *Rhodora*, Vol.3, No.3 (June, 1901), pp.160-165.

19 C.E. Hamlin, “Observations upon the Physical Geography and Geology of Mount Ktaadn and the Adjacent District.” *Bulletin of the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard College*, Geological series, Vol.1, No.V Cambridge, MA, June,1881, pp.189-223 with a map and heliotype taken from a model of Mt. Katahdin.

20 I reviewed the listed documents on the Hathi Trust website.

21 Plan of Township No. 3, R.10, W.E.L.S., with Adjacent Mountains, October 1881. by James W. and Joseph Sewall, Old Town, Maine, October, 1881. Now located at Raymond Fogler Library Special Collections in Sewall *Plan Book 1*, page 29.

*An Annotated Bibliography of Katahdin* compiled by Edward S.C. Smith and Myron H. Avery in 1936 was another resource I consulted. It included the three maps, with the Sewalls as cartographers, already mentioned.

The bibliography also cited a Katahdin map opposite page 15 in Allen C. Chamberlain's *Vacation Days in New England Highlands* (nd). I could not locate this book, but Sarah Otley of Mantor Library found a similar titled book, *Vacation Tramps in New England Highlands* with a Katahdin map (fourth map below) opposite page 154 and printed in 1919. Since this is a guidebook, an earlier version might exist.

Using the search engines serving all Maine libraries (URSUS, MaineCat, Colby/Bates/Bowdoin system) and using the publication date delimiter of 1846 to 1913, I found other accounts of scientific journeys to Katahdin. A number of these, as appearing in *Rhodora*, *The Plant World*, and various bulletins (botanical and geological), had a hand drawing of the mountain and some used Hamlin's map and heliotype that accompanied his 1881 scientific paper. None of them included trails as on the Chester party map.

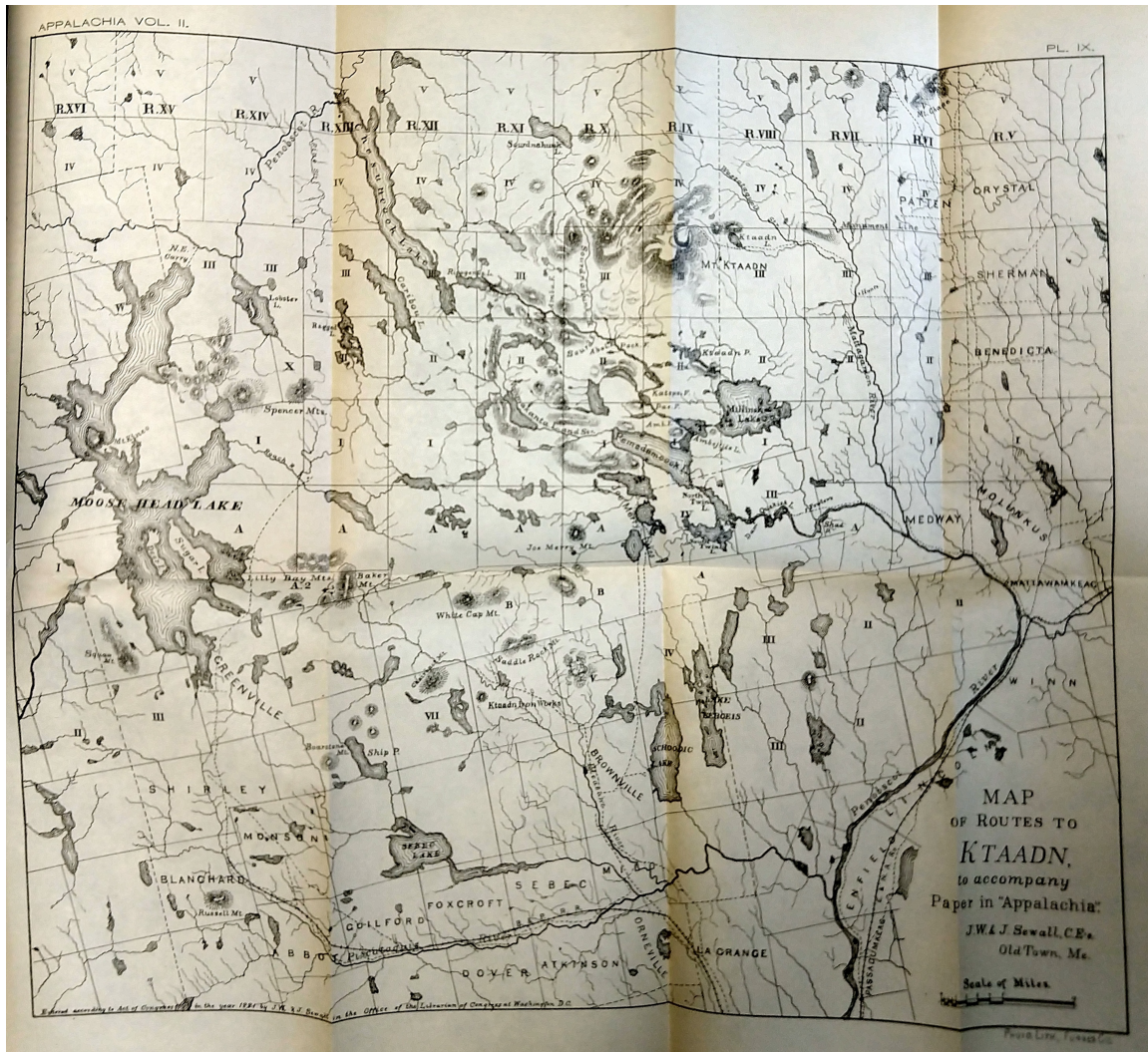
If asked by Professor Chester, a Colby College librarian in 1912 might well have directed him to the work of Charles E. Hamlin. Hamlin graduated in 1847 from what became Colby College, taught at Colby from 1853-1873, became a trustee in 1880, was much beloved at the college, engaged in long studies of the Katahdin region, and died in 1911. Hamlin's work on Katahdin would have been of particular interest to Geology Professor Little; a member of Chester's party. His scientific article, not dedicated to hiking the mountain, did mention the old Keep Trail and his party used "The Saddle" route daily to go back and forth to the summit area from Basin Ponds.

My best guess at this time is that Professor Chester borrowed the “Route to Ktaadn” map the Sewalls produced for Charles Hamlin’s 1881 *Appalachia* article. It has the trails that Chester noted were on his map, the map uses the Thoreau spelling of Ktaadn. Stacyville is not on the map, but the trail runs east to its unmarked location, and it has no trails in Wassataquoik valley.

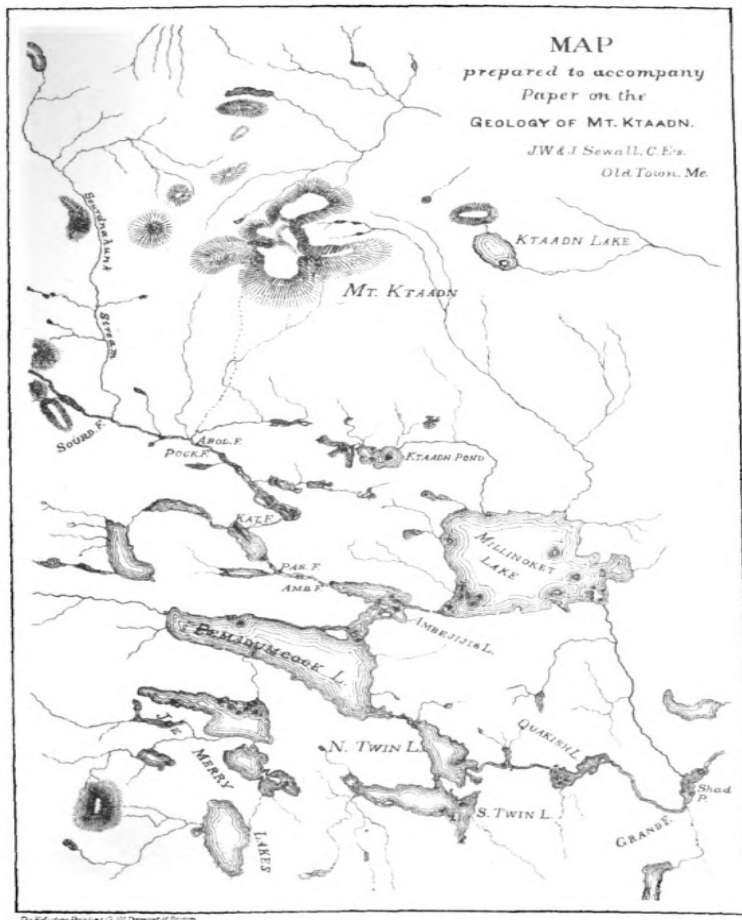
If one assumes that the item Professor Chester checked out of the Colby Miller Library was a diagram drawn by Thoreau, then someone once found and printed it, and now a search has yet to rediscover it. That it was once found and now lost seems dubious; did Thoreau really draw such a diagram? John Hessler was surprised when he found Thoreau’s copy of Champlain’s map with which Thoreau worked. Might someone experience another Thoreau surprise, a Thoreau drawn diagram of Katahdin?







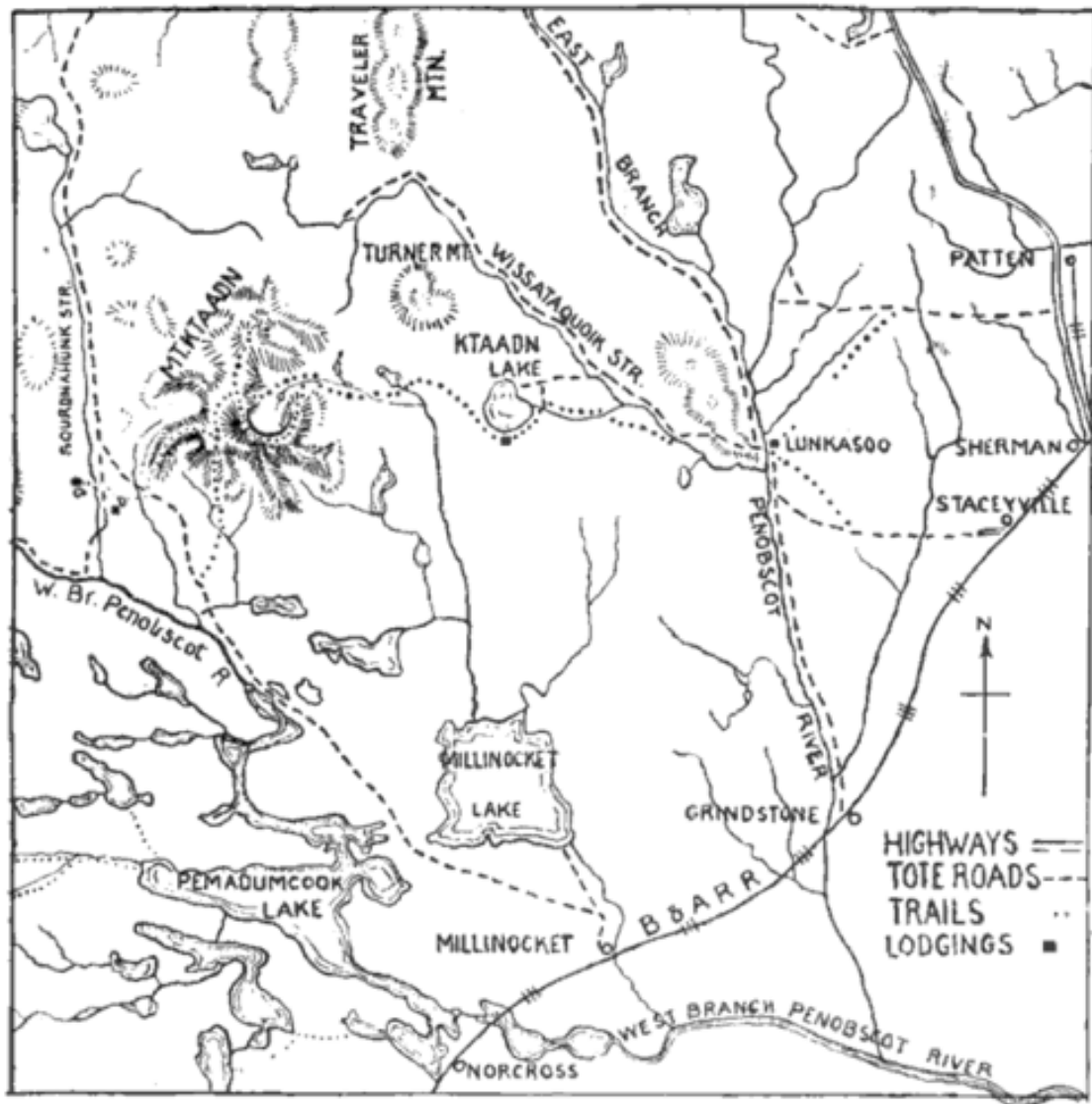
This map (1881) accompanied Hamlin's *Appalachia* article "Routes to Ktaadn."



Digitized by Google

Original from  
UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

This map (1881) accompanied Hamlin's 1881 scientific paper on his work on top Katahdin.



TRAILS TO AND ACROSS MOUNT KTAADN.

This map appeared opposite page 154 in Allen C. Chamberlain's book *Vacation Tramps in New England Highlands*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston & New York, 1919.



# Climbing Mt. Katahdin In 1912

By DR. WEBSTER CHESTER

In 1912 Colby College Commencement was over on the last Wednesday in June. We three teachers, Professor Carter of the Mathematics Department, Professor Little who had but recently arrived at Colby from John Hopkins and was in Geology and I, who had come to Colby in 1903 to introduce a course in Biology, had our plans all set to climb Mount Katahdin. We had discussed the idea thoroughly and were all ready to leave that first weekend after Commencement.

Our first problem was to find a map showing us how to get to Katahdin. All that we could find was a diagram that Thoreau had made in the middle of the last century when he paid Katahdin what was to become a famous visit. We borrowed the Thoreau diagram from the Colby College library.

Equipment for hiking was not available in 1912. We were told that we would need a blanket, a waterproof cover, a mosquito net and good walking shoes. I supplied myself with a khaki tarpaulin that I could throw over my head and cover my body if it rained. I think that my foot wear was an ordinary pair of shoes and rubbers. My blanket was a down puff. Mrs. Chester's confidence that I would return the puff unharmed was evidence of the family cooperation in my endeavor.

## Traveled Light

I don't remember what foot wear Carter provided for himself, but I do remember that Little wore a pair of walking shoes that came half way to his knees. One of us contributed a skillet to fry the bacon, another a coffee pot and we also had a pan for cooking Cream of Wheat. We had a compass and a hatchet and enough food for four or five days.

We had been advised to prepare for insects. Each one of us supplied himself with a generous yardage of cheese cloth. It wasn't possible to obtain insect repellents such as we have now. However, we did make up a concoction of tar and oil of citronella. We were told that lumbermen used this mixture in the woods. We carried a good supply of it. Little had been able to find a book of railroad tickets. As I remember, it was possible then to buy a book of 1,000 tickets for two cents a mile. Little kept that ticket book pinned to his shirt pocket.

We three hikers reached Millinocket late Friday afternoon and immediately we began the walk toward Katahdin. After a short time we made camp under a small maple. In the morning a white throat in the tree above us urged us to be on the way. The tote road toward the mountain was a good road. When, in later

years, we used a Model T we were sure we could have driven over that 1912 road easily.

We walked that road all day Saturday.

Now, as I look back on our progress, it seems as if we must have walked very slowly for we

**Ed. Note —** Dr. Webster Chester of Waterville, a graduate of Colgate University in 1900, joined the Colby College faculty in 1903. He introduced the study of Biology at Colby and for a time, was the only biology "teacher". For years he served as Head of his Department and retired from Colby College faculty in 1948. Both Colby and his Alma Mater, Colgate, conferred Doctor of Science Degrees on him. Dr. and Mrs. Chester make their home at 56 Barleigh St., Waterville. Their daughter, Mrs. Rebecca Larsen, is Registrar of the University of Maine, Portland.

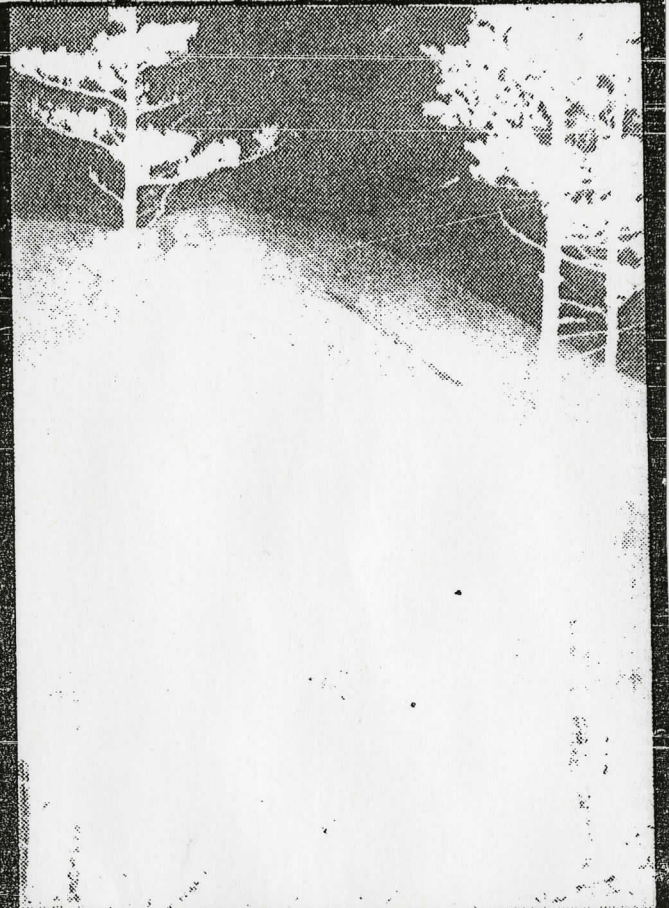
Of the three "teachers" who made the adventurous climb of Katahdin in 1912 only Dr. Chester is alive today.

"Never climbed another mountain," he admits cheerfully. "Always pleased that I climbed Katahdin when I did and with the friends I did. Quite a trip that was."

did not reach Abol stream that exploded. He swore that he afternoon. In the evening we would not stay in that place any longer. Carter and I were willing to vacate, too, for the try out our cheese cloth net. Little didn't seem to get his net arranged well. We heard, during the night, a good many expressions of uneasiness from him and about 3:30 A.M. he we made our way to Abol

## Wonderful Breakfast

On that early Sunday morning, before the sun was up, we made our way to Abol



**THOREAU'S TRAIL** — Majestic Mt. Katahdin now has well mapped trails and safety precautions for climbers, but in 1912 it was a wilderness. This is the trail Thoreau climbed and the three young Colby College professors had only Henry D. Thoreau's diagram of his Katahdin trip for a guide for their journey. That Thoreau "map" they borrowed from the Colby College library. This picture shows Katahdin from the new Millinocket Road, revealing historic Abol Slide which, for a time was closed, but now reopened. When the three Colby professors climbed they encountered the lumbering operations that for years have been obsolete on Katahdin, but the scars still can be seen. In light of today's preparation for a climb of Katahdin, of the precaution and training needed for the climb, it is a miracle that the three young "teachers" in their street shoes and with mosquito netting and down puffs ever survived their 1912 adventure.



said, "Let me get in." We

# 1912 Was Adventure

stream. We were not that spring was the most west slide. The bottom of the accustom'd to see a stream wonderful water that any man slide was a short distance from with such lovely clear water and ever drank. Through all the the spring. It fascinated us. What was years, since 1912, I have

more, the brook trout in it were remembered that drink of The slide was very steep. We all we could have wished for for water. Not surprising, because climbed about 20 steps and breakfast. No one had told us we were thirsty. The afternoon rested. The view from this that, on a hiking trip, we would had been hot and we had used a region was magnificent. Toward need a hook and line. We didn't lot of our homemade fly dope. the west and south there was have a hook, but we did find a The black flies, that I never nothing to obliterate the view. pin and a piece of string. By before had experienced, were The higher we went the larger turning over some rocks we AWFUL! I can remember now the horizon. Unfortunately it found worms. Soon we had the what a relief it was to enter began to cloud over, the loveliest trout sizzling in the that hut where it was dark and the atmosphere was very clear. skillet over our campfire. A free from those horrid flies. In

wonderful way to start a day. those bunks, that night, our At the top of the slide were a number of large rocks, piled on top of each other. There was an opening among them large enough to enter. This hole was the "Needle's Eye." We passed through this to the top of the Black Flies! cheese cloth nets surely kept  
It wasn't difficult to find the away the mosquitoes. trail to the top of the mountain. On Monday morning we  
Late that Sunday afternoon we started the rest of the climb. reached a bunkhouse near to The only trail from the hut that Thoreau's spring. The water in we could find was up the south

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FROM OUR FILES



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mountain. It was a flat area. On the opposite side we expected to find the trail down. On the right was the sharp extension of the Mountain, the "Knife Edge." After our mid-day meal we walked to the beginning of the "Knife Edge."

Many years after our experience in this area, an airplane picture of this part of Mt. Katahdin was hung on the lobby wall of the Depositor's Trust Co. Bank in Waterville. Almost every time I entered that bank I stood in front of that picture and recalled that Monday climb in 1912.

### Rain

Early that Monday afternoon it began to rain. Our immediate concern was to find a trail on the east side of the mountain. The map indicated a trail, but we could not find it. We attempted one, but we soon refused to take it. There were some blazed trees on our left that indicated a route to the north. That we decided to take.

None of us seemed worried about our condition. We were on top of Mt. Katahdin. We had to get down. We didn't know, but we had missed the easiest exit toward Chimney Pond. We could have gone back over the slide, but we realized that going down that wet slide "might" be dangerous. We felt if we followed the blazed trail it would carry us away from the railroad.

### Exhausting Trip

One of the odd things about that trip was that we had seen neither deer nor moose, yet in those days there were said to be many in the area. On that Monday we did not meet anyone. We struggled along, knowing that the trail had to lead to somewhere. In our progress one of us would go forward and find the next blaze and hold it until the other two came up. In this manner, we inch-wormed our way all afternoon. Our progress was faster than you might think. The route was over a relatively level area. I don't remember going up or down any steep incline.

How far we traveled I don't know. Before dark we came to an open area and it seemed to be an abandoned lumber camp.

It looked as if it had been Staceyville, so we travelled, all vacated only recently. We were that day, toward Staceyville. on the top of a very high hill. The road wasn't comparable to Because it was raining we could see surrounding peaks from Milinocket. It was There was a wooden sluice way leading from the top of the hill to a stream far below. We found a path along side the sluice way and took it.

### We Slept

At the bottom of the hill was an abandoned saw mill where there was enough saw dust for a good bed. There was enough roof to keep us dry. Soon after supper we turned in. Little felt so concerned about his wet place

During the day a noisy load of lumbermen passed us. They were on their way in. That night we came to a clearing where there had been a lumber camp. There was a body of water with a raft of logs moored near the shore. The quietness of the water was an ideal breeding place for mosquitoes. We

clothing. I cleaned my body, but people used the smoking car on Carter, in fun, "lifted" the book that trip with us.

of railroad tickets from Little's. When I reached home my wife pocket as Little slept on the rushed out to greet me. She was ground-shows that even at the glad to see me. A minute later I end of that gruelling trip Carter was refused entrance at my own still had enough energy left to front door. Instead, plenty of play tricks.

soap and hot water were handed Out in the open air we were out to me along with fresh not conscious of the odor of the I never did get that down puff mosquito dope we carried on us, clean. That was a casualty of but once on the train it was my one and only mountain another matter. We occupied a climbing trip. I never undertook corner of the smoking car and another mountain climb, but I slept all the way back to wouldn't have missed that 1912 Waterville. I am sure few trip for anything in the world.

**LOOKING DOWN FROM KATAHDIN** — Every step of the way up Katahdin climbers have wonderful scenic treats. This beautiful shot was taken of Chimney Pond, often called "that jewel of a lake."

shoes that he pondered long as what to do. He was certain that if he took them off to dry he wouldn't be able to put them on in the morning so finally he decided to wear them all night and he fell asleep in his wet, uncomfortable shoes.

Sometime during the night the rain stopped. After breakfast we crossed the stream and found a road that led off to the right. Little had gone no more than a few steps before he sat down and took off his shoes. He couldn't stand them. They were killing him. What he was to do without his shoes, we didn't know, but he couldn't go on wearing them.

Luck was with us. Little hadn't walked very long in his stocking feet before we came upon an active lumber camp. They welcomed us and Little was able to buy a pair of moccasins and with these on his feet, he finished the trip in comfort.

### Where Were We?

Just where we were we did not know. The map didn't go before train arrival, we rested that far. We were told that the tote road would take us to share of walking. The fact that

learned that the place was called "Mosquito Dam."

A man who lived in one of the old bunk houses invited us to stay all night with him. The perfectly dark interior and the heavy odor of smoke persuaded us to choose the open air. There were scattered logs against which we could fasten our sleeping equipment. We were each of us careful to place our mosquito nets in such a manner that it would be almost impossible to enter our prepared sleeping quarters without taking in at least two mosquitoes. We slapped mosquitoes, it seemed, for hours, but we were tired out and when we finally fell asleep we slept till early morning.

We found that we had passed that Tuesday night not far from the east Branch of the Penobscot river. We had been told that if we called to the ferryman across the river he would come for us and take us across. That we did and before noon we were at the railroad station at Staceyville.

### Dead Beat